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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: RICE'S BEIJING TRIP

1. Summary: The Taipei dailies continued March 22 to report on U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit to Beijing by focusing on a press conference she attended there Monday in which she said the Anti-Secession Law is not a welcome development and Beijing should adopt measures to reduce cross-Straits tensions. All the major Chinese-language newspapers in Taiwan carried Rice's remarks in their inside pages, while the centrist "China Times" and the pro-unification "United Daily News" also reported the articulation of gratitude by Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council to the United States for its concern about cross-Straits peace. The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily," in a page-two story, quoted a high-ranking Taiwan official as saying Rice's remarks urging China to take action to reduce cross-Straits tensions were "good enough" even though she did not mention that Taiwan's future "should be determined by the 23 million people in Taiwan."

2. The "China Times" and the "United Daily News" published news analyses that said, judging from Rice's remarks, Washington and Beijing have come to a tacit agreement regarding the cross-Straits situation. Washington correspondent Vincent Chang commented in the "United Daily News" that even though Washington scolded Beijing over the Anti-Secession Law, the reality was that the United States has acknowledged the existence of the law, which, with Washington's tacit acknowledgement, has become part of the 'status quo' for both sides of the Straits. A limited-circulation, pro-independence English-language "Taipei Times" editorial, however, said Rice has botched her chance to achieve something in Beijing as she failed to persuade China to reduce cross-Straits tensions. End summary.

A) "Washington and Beijing Have Gradually Come to a Tacit Agreement to 'Co-manage' the Cross-Straits Situation"

Journalist Yu Hui-chien noted in the "Beijing Observation" column of the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 600,000] (3/22):

"U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, contrary to Taipei's expectations, merely said in Beijing that the Anti-Secession Law was not a welcome development. Just as Beijing had expected, Rice did not make a fuss about the law. Some people in Beijing who are well versed in affairs regarding Washington and Beijing hold an optimistic view and believe that in consideration of their own separate interests, the framework of U.S.-China co-management of the cross-Straits situation has already emerged. .

"Both China and the United States have reached a tacit agreement about 'co-managing' the cross-Straits situation. But Washington is clearly aware that it will not be able to affect Taiwan as effectively as Beijing expects. ."

B) "Amazing Coincidence! Washington and Beijing Have Reached a Tacit Agreement Regarding the Cross-Straits Situation?"

Journalist Wang Li-chuan said in the conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 600,000] (3/22):

". With regard to the cross-Straits issue, [U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza] Rice's use of language

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towards both sides of the Taiwan Straits has been very cautious. Regarding Taiwan, Rice did not use words like 'not supporting Taiwan independence' or 'opposing Taiwan independence,' which is friendlier than last year when U.S. President George W. Bush articulated his opposition to Taiwan independence. On the other hand, however, Rice did not express opposition to the Anti-Secession Law as Taiwan had hoped. Such a development seems to indicate that Washington does not believe the Anti-Secession Law will change the status quo. .

"Rice has repeatedly stressed that she `hopes Beijing will adopt measures to demonstrate its goodwill and reduce [cross-Strait] tensions.' This remark was coincident with Beijing's planned next step toward Taiwan. Such an amazing coincidence makes it easy for people to suspect that Beijing and Washington may have reached some tacit agreement over the cross-Strait issue, so that Washington thinks that Beijing's [next] moves meet the United States' requirement that `neither side should unilaterally attempt to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. .'

C) "Washington Scolds Beijing But Has Tacitly Acknowledged the Anti-Secession Law"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang observed in the conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 600,000] (3/22):

"With regard to the Anti-Secession Law, two conclusive results have been generated from U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's recent trip to Beijing: namely, Beijing is the troublemaker, but Washington has acknowledged the existence of the Anti-Secession Law. .

"In contrast, the Bush administration, as of now, has not articulated its opposition to the Anti-Secession Law, which Taipei believes has altered the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. .

"But Rice has at least clearly pointed out that the law `has increased tensions and jeopardized the `possibility' of cross-Strait dialogue. Instead of vaguely describing that the United States hopes `both sides' should not do anything unilaterally that would increase tensions across the Strait, Washington has finally identified that Beijing is the troublemaker for [creating] the Anti-Secession Law. For Taipei, such a move is better than nothing. But the Mainland Affairs Council's and Foreign Ministry's `sincere gratitude' to the small favors done by the United States showed they were too easily pleased. This is because Taipei must recognize a cruel fact revealed in Rice's talks: the United States will not only stop opposing the Anti-Secession Law any more but has already acknowledged its existence! .

"In other words, even Beijing was lightly reprimanded by Rice orally, the reality was that it made no harm to the fact that the Anti-Secession Law has become the `status quo' for both sides of the Taiwan Strait under the tacit acknowledgement of the United States. ."

D) "Rice Botched Her Chance in Beijing"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (3/22):

"China's "Anti-Secession" Law was one of the key issues for US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's two-day visit to Beijing. During a meeting with Rice on Sunday, Chinese President Hu Jintao demanded that the US not send a `wrong signal' to the `Taiwan separatist forces,' while Rice reiterated Washington's opposition to any unilateral action that may change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait.

"Superficially, the two countries [i.e. the United States and China] appeared equally matched in the meeting, but in fact, China had the upper hand, as it had already passed a law legitimizing in its own mind its threat of war against Taiwan. That law has shifted the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. In requesting that Beijing make efforts to reduce cross-strait tension, Washington was merely trying to remedy a situation that existed. There is no guarantee that Beijing will take up this proposal, so clearly Hu came off better in the talks. .

"Rice had the means of persuading China to reduce cross-strait tensions at her disposal, but she failed to make use of the opportunity. The means are the themes of `freedom' and `democracy' that figured to prominently in US President George W. Bush's second inauguration speech. The disparity between Taiwan and China is not only a question of incomes and quality of life, but one of values, beliefs and systems of government. This difference cannot be made to disappear through the use of guns, battleships or missiles. .

"Since the passage of the `Anti-Secession' Law, antipathy and suspicion of China among the people of Taiwan has increased. Taiwan's anxiety about China can only be reduced in the Beijing leadership is prepared to show respect for Taiwan's existence, introduce

measures that guarantee its security and enhance the prosperity of Taiwan's society. For example, they could stop blocking Taiwan efforts to join the World Health Organization as an observer and sign free-trade agreements with other countries. This would pave the way toward cross-straits negotiations founded on equality. ."

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